

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jill Angie

[The Not Your Average Runner Podcast](#) with Jill Angie

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

Welcome to the *Not Your Average Runner* podcast. If you're a woman who has never felt athletic but you still dream about becoming a runner, you are in the right place. I'm Jill Angie, a certified running and life coach and I teach women how to start running, feel confident, and change their lives. And now, I want to help you.

Hey Rebels. So last week we talked all about how to stay consistent with exercise, especially if you are just getting started. So what did you think about that? Did it change anything in your thinking? This week I want to talk about the same topic, but in a totally different way. So instead of how to stay consistent, I want to talk about how to stop quitting after you've started.

And whether it is to become a consistent exerciser, or to do food prep every week, or to start meditating, or whatever it is, we all know what it feels like to start something feeling really gung ho and then sort of drop off after a while. Or to constantly have those arguments in your head about like, "I don't want to do the thing today, but I want to do the thing today." It feels pretty shitty, to be honest.

So let's just kind of roll it back to the very beginning. And we're going to use running as our example for today's discussion, because this is a running podcast. So let's go way back to when you first started running. And it's great for a week or two, right? Maybe even a couple of months.

You're super excited, your motivation is high. You can't imagine not ever doing this new thing, right? You're like, "Oh my god, I'm a runner. This is amazing. I will never stop doing this. This is my new life. Here it is. I'm a runner." You know exactly what I mean.

But then something happens. And maybe, I don't know, you're extra tired one morning, you get stuck in a big traffic jam on the way home from work,

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

you forget to bring your running shoes to the gym. Whatever it is and you miss a run. And sure, shit happens.

But it's like once that door is cracked open, it's really easy to miss another day. And then all the thoughts start. The how I'm screwing up, or I've lost so much fitness, or I'm not as good as I used to be. All that inner mean girl stuff starts up. And the next thing you know, it's been two weeks, and then it's three and you're like looking around like, "What the fuck has happened? I just gave up completely."

So we've all been there and today we're going to talk about how to slow that train down before it goes off the rails. Now one thing I can tell you for sure is that running is something that pretty much everybody wants to quit at one time or another.

It might be first thing in the morning and you wake up and you are thinking, "This is dumb, I don't want to be a runner anymore." Because getting up in the morning is hard, right? Or maybe you get up in the morning and you start your training run and then you hear that little voice in your head that says, "This is hard. This is boring. It's too hot. I don't want to do this anymore." And you're quitting in the middle of your workout.

So there are all kinds of reasons that we want to quit. But everybody does want to at one time or another. I mean, just on my run this morning I wanted to quit. I had all kinds of thoughts about it. I didn't have a problem getting out the door, but then I got out the door and it was really humid.

And I had three miles on the schedule and I'm like, "All right, it's been 20 minutes, I can quit now." And then then it was like, "Well, I'm almost to two miles. I'll quit at two miles." And then I got to two miles and then I'm like, "All right, well, I'll just quit as soon as I get to the corner." It was just this constant, my brain offering me options to quit. It was fucking relentless.

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

Now, not every run is like that but I'm just like everybody else, I have those same thoughts about giving up, I just handle them differently. So you know that you're going to have those thoughts, right? It's not a matter of if it's a matter of when. And so that means that you just need to be prepared for the moment or moments when they come up.

It doesn't mean there's anything wrong with you that your brain wants to quit, it's completely normal. It's what you do with it that matters. And really, this applies to everything in life. Everything. We're talking through in the context of running today, but as I always say to my Run Your Best Life Clients, you don't have to just apply the tools I teach you to running, you can apply them everywhere in your life.

So, the concept I want to introduce you to today, and I've talked about it before on the podcast is that we quit on different levels. I like to call them big quits and little quits.

So big quits are very decisive and conscious. We actually are just like, "I quit. I give up. I'm done. I'm not going to do this thing anymore. I'm not going to pursue this goal." It's an intention that we are not going to do it. We're going to discontinue the behavior. We're going to discontinue pursuing the goal period and we do it with intention, with our conscious brain.

It's like quitting a job. You don't accidentally quit your job. You say, "All right, today's the day. I'm going to quit my job." Or dropping out of a race. It's like, "I'm not going to show up for my race because I'm not fully trained and I don't want to get injured. I'm making a conscious decision not to show up for those reasons." So those are big quits.

But little quits are totally different. Little quits are giving into that urge, that urge for momentary comfort or relief at the expense of your long term wellbeing. And at the expense of feeling satisfied about meeting your goals.

[The Not Your Average Runner Podcast](#) with Jill Angie

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

So little quits happen when the action you're planning to take, or the action you're in the middle of taking, maybe you're in the middle of your run is uncomfortable in some way either emotionally or physically and you're like, "I'm just going to little quit. I'm just going to little quit right now."

It's like deciding to sleep in a little longer in the morning because it feels better in the moment. Your bed is warm, it's cold outside. I mean, somewhere on the planet it's got to be cold outside, right? It's definitely not cold in New Jersey.

But think about it in the winter, your bed is warm, it's cold outside. You're kind of tired, maybe you stayed up late the night before. So right in that moment staying in bed and skipping your run seems like a good plan of action. Because your brain is like, "We don't want to go. We don't want to be cold, we want to stay warm. We want to stay comfortable." So you quit, you skip your run. But then later on you're not happy with yourself. So you're trading that short term pleasure for the long term wellbeing.

When you're a mile into a three mile run and it's hot and it's humid, and your brain tells you we should stop early because this feels hard, this is uncomfortable. And so you quit and then later on you feel bad, you feel guilty because you didn't do what you said you were going to do.

It's a tradeoff that we make and it happens because our brains are so much more concerned with what we're feeling right in this moment than what we might feel later. You're quite literally procrastinating your discomfort.

And by that, I mean your emotional discomfort because sure, you're going to feel physically more comfortable lying in bed. And you're definitely going to be emotionally more comfortable lying in bed. But then you're going to feel guilty or disappointed in yourself later, you're going to feel awful. So you're just procrastinating those emotions until later.

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

What's happening in that decision moment there, when you say, "I'm just going to stay in bed," is that you're quitting on yourself just for a little bit. I like to call it a little quit because it doesn't really feel like quitting does it? It seems like you're just taking a break or it's self-care, or you're just taking a day off. But really, it's a temporary quit. It's like for the next six hours, I'm quitting on myself.

And just to be clear, this is totally different than taking time off because you are injured or you're sick. You should always listen to your body. I'm talking about those times when you know in your heart of hearts that you could go running and you choose not to.

So let's use 5K training as an example. And the plan that I use for my beginner clients that I give out in the Rebel Runner Roadmap and in Run Your Best Life, it's 12 weeks long. You're running three times a week, so that's 36 runs. 36 training runs. Well, 35 training runs plus your race.

And you've signed up for the race so you've committed to it. You've said, "Yes, this is the thing I want to do." And because of your work schedule, in this example, you know at least two days a week you're going to have to get up early before work to go running.

Now, every evening before your scheduled run you have the best of intentions, right? You pack your gym bag, you lay out your clothes, you make sure your phone and your Garmin are charging. You set your alarm. You go to sleep thinking, "I'm going to get up, I'm going to go running tomorrow morning."

Then the alarm goes off and you're super cozy in bed, because we're always super cozy in bed. And you think, "I was really good all last week, I nailed every single run. This bed feels so good. I'm kind of tired. Just this one time I'm going to skip my run. I'm going to treat myself and sleep in." And it doesn't seem like a big deal. I mean, it's just one run, right?

[The Not Your Average Runner Podcast](#) with Jill Angie

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

And this is a conversation we all have ourselves. But this is a little tiny quit. And it does seem tiny because you're not quitting with a capital Q, you're still planning to keep training for the race. You're just skipping a run. That's how we rationalize it in our brain.

Now, every time you find yourself in this situation I want you to know that really, you're quitting on yourself right there and then. And you don't think of it that way, because like I said, you're still planning on doing the race. But you're giving up in that moment, and that is quitting.

If you had to say it out loud every time you skipped a run, if you had to say, "I quit," or "I'm quitting for the next 24 hours," you'd have a totally different outcome. You'd realize that's what you're doing. If you're saying, "I'm quitting on myself for the next four hours, I'm not going to go for my run," you'd be telling yourself a totally different story if you had to tell the exact truth about what's going on.

So I want to give you some phrases that we often use that are kind of red flags that we're about to do that little quit. The quit with the lowercase Q, the little sneaky quit.

So when you find yourself saying I just need a break right now. I'm too tired today. I'm too busy. It's too hard. I'm not good at this. I'm confused about what to do. I'll do it tomorrow. I just don't feel like it. Those are all hints. Those are red flags that you're quitting, especially that last one. I just don't feel like it, that's a killer. It's a motivation killer.

So all of those sentences are evidence you're quitting on yourself in the moment. And every time you hear yourself say one I want you to say, "If instead of saying I just don't feel like it, I said, I'm quitting for the next 24 hours, would there be a different outcome?" Because here's the hard truth, little quits, always sound totally legit in the moment, but they are really just excuses for not doing something you said you wanted to do.

[The Not Your Average Runner Podcast](#) with Jill Angie

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

You want to be a runner, nobody is forcing you. Nobody made you sign up for that race. So they're just excuses because you've decided in the moment that your short term pleasure and comfort, like sleeping in a little bit longer is more important to you than your long term wellbeing. Which is feeling good about getting your run done, and maybe even having a great race day.

So I'm going to repeat that, when a little quit is basically deciding that your short term pleasure and comfort is more important than your long term wellbeing. Or again, to put it another way, you're deciding you'd rather feel the emotional discomfort and the guilt later, instead of the physical discomfort now.

You're procrastinating that emotional discomfort. And if you remember episode 209 from a couple weeks ago, you're literally choosing the emotional hard of feeling guilt over the physical hard of running.

And it makes total sense, right? Our brains are way more concerned with how we feel right now than how they might feel later. So in evolutionary terms, like I don't know, 10,000 or a million years ago I guess, your brain is like, "Oh, it could be dead tomorrow so I need to focus on the here. I can be chased by a tiger right here and now." So our brain is not concerned about 24 hours, 48 hours. There wasn't a lot of planning in ancient times.

But the problem is, we don't live in that environment anymore. And the problem of getting chased by a saber toothed tiger has been replaced by the problem of whether to get up and run in the cold or stay in bed. And our brains don't know the difference. Primitive brain still operates the same circuitry of protect you in the moment.

And they always want to take the path of least resistance. The path that seems like the one that's going to conserve the most energy, which of course, is staying in bed instead of going out and running. So your brain is

[The Not Your Average Runner Podcast](#) with Jill Angie

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

just confused because you're like, "I just want to go for a run." Your brain is like, "I don't understand. I don't get it."

And so that primitive brain overrides, the path of least resistance is of course to stay in bed. And then what we do on top of that, so our brain is doing what it's been designed to do. And then it happens and we wake up and we're like, "Oh crap, I missed another training run."

Then we start talking smack to ourselves, because a few little quits add up like that. And then we're like, "What's wrong with you? Why can't you stick to anything? You're so lazy." You're like literally brain operating as intended, and then we're pissed about it.

So you can stop beating yourself up every time you don't keep a commitment like a training run. I want you to stop beating yourself up about it because really, you're not lazy, you're not broken. The evolution of our brain has not caught up to the evolution in our environment. All right?

So I want you to know, though, that missing the run is one thing. Missing a run, not a huge deal in the grand scheme of your training. You can put strategies in place and work on yourself so that you don't do it again. It's the heaping of the negative thoughts on top of it is what makes it so painful and so much worse and leads you to keep quitting.

You can't go back in time and redo that run, but you can avoid making it worse by not saying terrible things to yourself about it. So let's just agree right now, the beatings can stop.

When the morning alarm goes off, and you start thinking how nice it would be to stay in bed. You're like, "Oh, my God, why am I always having this argument?" You're like, "Oh, that's right, my primitive brain is still in charge,

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

because I'm kind of sleepy. So I'm going to give it a moment and then I'm going to allow my prefrontal cortex to take over.”

Because that's the part of your brain that you want to be running the show because you're really not in any danger. And I know you're asking yourself like, “What's the big deal, Jill, if we quit on ourselves once or twice along the way? Why are we making such a big deal out of this?” And the answer is, it's really not a big deal if it's just once or twice.

If we let the primitive brain get in the driver's seat once or twice, it's really not a big deal. But here's where it gets tricky, because it's not going to impact your training, but if you start giving your primitive brain permission to run the show, you're kind of like giving up the reins. It's a slippery slope, because then you start to think –

Here's the other thing, missing a workout, missing two workouts doesn't undo all of your hard work. But that slippery slope is that your primitive brain starts to think, “Oh, I can get away with this. Because I missed a workout last week and I was fine this week. So maybe I don't need to run as much as I thought I did.”

So then you start running twice a week instead of three times a week. Or you skip a long run here or there. And that is really the true issue. Because too many little quits over time add up to the big quits. Because now you're building the habit in your primitive brain of quitting, instead of building the habit of running.

So you're basically just reinforcing those neural pathways in your brain every time it says, “Let's stay in bed,” and you're like, “All right, sounds good.” That circuit gets stronger.

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

So let's take the 5K as an example one more time. Your training plan says run three times a week for 12 weeks, that's 36 runs in total. Along the way, mostly during the training process, there's going to be times when you don't feel like doing what you need to do.

And as we discussed you're probably not going to think, "Oh, I'm quitting." Because you're still planning to run the race. You're not thinking I'm going to quit the race, you're thinking, I'm just not going to do this run. And it sounds legit. You miss one training run out of 36, you're going to be fine on race day, I promise. Even probably two or three runs, you're still going to be fine.

And then once you realize that missing that one run doesn't really make a difference, you're going to be tempted to do it again. And then the next time you don't feel like it, you're going to do it again. And then one little quit leads to another and suddenly it's race day, and you've done maybe 20 out of the 36 runs. And now you're under trained.

And so then you think, "Oh, I'm not properly trained. It's not safe for me to do this, I might get injured." So your brain makes this decision that you shouldn't do the race. And that's the big quit, that's the capital Q. That's a conscious, I'm not going to show up for the race because it's a bad idea.

And in the moment, that big quit seems like you're making a really smart decision. Which is true, right? If you're under trained you don't want to show up and hurt yourself. But the reality is you're not making a conscious decision now. You started making this decision with the big Q unconsciously months ago, the first time you said, "Fuck it, I'm just going to sleep in."

Those little quits, they start adding up and then they give you evidence to support the big quits the capital Qs. They undermine your confidence and your belief in yourself until eventually you go for the big Q.

[The Not Your Average Runner Podcast](#) with Jill Angie

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

So when I say how to stop quitting, I don't mean the big quit where you say I'm going to drop out of the race. I want you to start figuring out how to stop the little quits because that's where you're going to get some traction.

So this starts with having very compelling reasons for wanting to achieve your goal. And they got to be so important to you that you wouldn't dream of ignoring them.

So for example, if you gave me \$1,000 and said, "If I don't do all my training runs you can give that money to Donald Trump. And if I do all the runs, you give me my money back." If that's the deal, you give me that \$1,000 and you are not a fan of Donald Trump, as I am not, you're going to do every one of those training runs, right?

If you're just like, "My \$1,000 is going to go to this dude that I cannot stand if I miss a training run. I'm going to do every single one of those training runs." So that's an extreme but very effective example. But you get what I mean, right?

So you got to know what your compelling reason is. It's that thing that makes it nonnegotiable, a done deal. That I said I'm going to do this, and I'm absolutely going to do it.

Now, for a lot of people that is just knowing that there's a race at the end of the line. That's more than enough of a compelling reason for some people, not everyone. For the record, I am not one of those people. Some people are compelled by the satisfaction of crossing off training runs on their calendar, accumulating the miles. These people that are in for those thousand mile challenges, it's very motivating. I'm kind of one of those people.

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

But I want to take you through a little exercise to help you find your compelling reasons. And this is not an exercise that's going to require you to get up and move your body. Unless you're running right now, in which case, keep going. So this is a writing exercise. I want you to take five minutes, set a timer and write down everything that running gives you.

And, for example, on my list it might say improves fitness, stress relief, clearing my mind, I call it burning off the crazy. I used to say getting time to spend with friends. Not so much anymore. Quiet time, podcast time, listening to music. I get increased confidence and self-esteem from running. I get the pride of accomplishment. I get to wear my cute running outfits. I get medals. Running gives me all those things.

Other people might say running gives me a chance to be a good example for my kids. Or they like Disney runs, so they like training for a run because they like to run at Disney.

So you get the picture. Five minutes, list out all the things that you get from running. And then I want you to go through your list and decide what on that list you absolutely can't live without.

So for example with me, the joy of movement and the stress relief I cannot live without that. It is life given to me that I feel the joy of physical movement. I cannot stand the thought of not being able to go out and move my body. The stress relief also very important, and nothing relieves my stress the way movement does.

So I'm actually starting to feel – I feel that way about running, I'm starting to feel that way about strength training too, which is super fun. And I can't get that feeling from anything else except maybe my Peloton, also from the Peloton. Definitely not cupcakes. Totally tried that, cupcakes don't work for that stress relief.

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

But I know that when I skip a workout, I'm going to have this sort of like edgy energy in my body that needs an outlet. And one thing I know for sure is that energy shows up like an unruly toddler if I don't give it something to do. So for me, running three to four times a week, strength training twice a week keeps it under control. So for me, that's a very compelling reason, cannot live without it.

So I want you to go through your list, decide what you can't live without, and then cross off the stuff that's optional. Like, I don't know, running clothes, right? Cute running clothes, you can live without that. It's not mandatory, at least for me.

So now that you've crossed some of that stuff off, you're going to take that smaller list of everything that running gives you, and now I want you to cross off anything you can get from something other than running.

And so for me, listening to podcasts is on my list of things that running gives me. Listening to podcasts is another thing I can't live without. But I can listen to podcasts at other times when I'm not running. So running is not the only method for me to get that. So it comes off the list.

You're going to make that list smaller and smaller and smaller, and what's left, those are your really compelling reasons. And so I want you to take a moment and write about why they're important to you. And it might be things like setting a good example for your kids, burning off the crazy, whatever it is. Time that you get to spend with your spouse, like maybe you and your spouse run together.

Write about why they're important to you. Why you feel like you can't live without them. What your life would be like if you didn't take time to create those things. Whatever it is, what would your life be like if you didn't take the time to create those things through running?

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

And then connect with this list on a daily basis. Like before you go to bed at night, first thing in the morning. Read it aloud to yourself as a voice memo on your phone, listen to it in the car as a meditation.

I want you to think of it like you're installing it as software in your brain. And then the next time you find yourself wanting to sleep in and skip your run, you'll remember what we've talked about today, you'll remember your list. This is how you're going to evolve your brain into somebody who doesn't little quit on herself.

All right. So one more exercise for you to do. I want you to take the time to anticipate the challenges and obstacles and excuses you're going to have during your training, during your running so you're prepared instead of taken by surprise.

And if we use our 5K example, you're going to have 36 workouts to do to train for your race. That's going to be 36 opportunities for you to quit on yourself. So take a moment, write out 10 things, 10 challenges, 10 obstacles, 10 excuses that you expect your brain is going to come up with whenever it's time to do a run. Be specific, draw on past experiences, if necessary.

And then when those times come up, you're going to have three questions that you're going to answer for yourself. The first is, do I want to quit right now because of discomfort, fear, or anxiety? Like, am I just worried about the run and it's going to be hard? Or I don't want to get out of bed because it's cold outside. So are you trying to quit right now because of discomfort, fear, or anxiety?

And if that's the reason, it's a terrible reason to say you're not going running. Second question, are you saying things like, "I just need a break. I'll do it tomorrow. I don't feel like it right now." Again, if that's the situation,

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

your primitive brain is in control, this is not a good reason to quit on your run.

The third question is, are you in a hurry to quit? Do you have that agitated feeling like, "I just can't do this right now. I just can't handle this right now." Again, if you're in a hurry to quit and delay your run, it's probably a good reason to actually go for a run because the run is going to help you with those emotions.

So if the answer to any of those three questions is yes, it's a clue that your primitive brain is in control. And that's when you need to go back to those reasons you came up with to override your primitive brain. Those compelling reasons that you just cannot live without. The things that running gives you that you can't get anywhere else that you have to have in your life.

One last thing, just to be clear, if you are injured or sick, again, I'm not suggesting you override that. You are the authority on your own body. If you're not feeling right, make adjustments, okay? I promise you guys, it gets easier. And the more you override your primitive brain, the easier it gets. It's just like a muscle, exercising a muscle. Like anything else, you keep at it, eventually it's going to become a very solid habit.

Okay, that's how to stop quitting. I know this was fast and furious today. But if you want more help in how to stop quitting, how to stay consistent, how to block your excuses and just really do the thing that you want to be doing, I want you to come to the How to be a Consistent Exerciser virtual workshop on August 29th.

We're going to dive deep into exactly why you're not exercising right now, how to fix it. And then I'm going to help you create a customized workout routine just for you. My goal for every student in this class is for you to learn

Ep #211: How to Keep Going When You Want to Quit

and understand the tools to manage your thinking so you can stick with exercise and get all the amazing benefits.

Now the class is over Zoom, it is from noon to 3pm Eastern Time on August 29th. If you're listening to this podcast is just in a couple days. It's just 39 to attend, \$39 to attend. The class is perfect for anyone just starting out as an exerciser. But also, for anyone who struggles with quitting on themselves like we talked about today.

All the details can be found on my website at notyouraveragerunner.com/workshop. I hope I'm going to see you there because this is going to be a good workshop. We're going to take everything we learned last week, and this week, and actually two weeks ago and earlier in the year. I'm throwing all my best stuff into this.

So, link is in the show notes, but again just go to notyouraveragerunner.com/workshop, you can sign up there. I hope I will see you there.

Okay my rebellious friends, that is it for today. I love you, stay safe. Get your ass out there and run and I will talk to you next week.

Oh, and one last thing. If you enjoyed listening to this episode, you have to check out the Rebel Runner Roadmap. It's a 30 day online program that will teach you exactly how to start running, stick with it, and become the runner you've always wanted to be. Head on over to rebelrunnerroadmap.com to join. I'd love to be a part of your journey.